



TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

Invisible Borders

We drove north from Dublin
between stone walls and hedges
bound for Bailieborough,
down through Greaghnadarragh
listening to the Irish language
radio station, not understanding
a word but loving the sounds.
The soft rain glistened on stones
and dripped from branches,
threatening to turn to ice.
On the main street of the village
my ancestors called home,
half the shops had my name
written above the door
and half the pubs were closed.
We ate lunch in the Bailie Hotel,
served massive platefuls
and pints by a distant relation.

Late in the afternoon, long past
Kingscourt, Carrickmacross,
and Kavanagh country,
you sat in the passenger seat
as we crossed the invisible border,
cradling a bottle of Aussie red
picked up at a petrol station
on the outskirts of Dundalk.
We drove through the shadows
of the mountains of Mourne
down to Warrenpoint, searching
for your grandfather's summer
home in the gloaming as darkness
descended on Carlingford Lough.

After dark, we drove deeper
into the north, through
Newtownhamilton, Lisnadill
and Armagh to Loughall,
where an old friend waited
with a warm meal and whiskey
to guide us safely across borders
we could not see, navigating
cartography only visible to a local.

Nathanael O'Reilly. Three poems: 'Invisible Borders', 'Remember Armagh' and 'The Hill of Tara' *Transnational Literature* Vol. 4 no. 2, May 2012.
<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

Remember Armagh

Remember that night in Armagh?
When the locals in the pub
Asked where we'd come from?
Remember the sneer
In the voice of the sloshed
Middle-aged regular at the bar –
*Why would anyone want to go
To Dublin?* – she slurred, her face
Turning uglier as she dragged
Out the final syllables,
The silence hanging loudly
At the end of the question
Implying there was absolutely
Nothing possibly worth seeing
Or doing south of the border
In the *Republic*. We muttered
Something in a light-hearted
Tone about relatives, museums
And pubs, not wanting to stir up
Any troubles and turned back
To our mates. Soon signs
Were made, looks exchanged,
Pints drained purposefully,
Coats and hats donned
As we headed for the door
In search of a peaceful place
For a few quiet pints by the fire.

The Hill of Tara

Lacking a rag, I tied
a fresh white handkerchief
to a tree on the Hill of Tara
late last December
and silently thought
a prayer for my daughter
taking comfort in a ritual
that was foreign to me
but routine for my people
seeking to connect
in some small way
through a simple gesture
to my ancestors who ruled
the land spread before me
all the way to the horizon

Nathanael O'Reilly